



**MYTHOLOGOS  
NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME ONE  
ISSUE 02  
APRIL 2021**

**IDYLLS  
OF  
THE  
KING**

**THE  
MAKING  
OF AN  
EPIC**



## **BEHIND THE SCENES Of The CARROT FIELD AUDIOBOOK**



**MEET THE  
NARRATOR:**

**TONY CLEARY**

*Tell us a little bit about your background—where you live, your previous career, hobbies/interests...*

I have a studio in a modern converted barn in Norfolk, UK, which I converted 10 years ago. Because my wife is a pianist and musician she wanted a studio space for her musical interests. I included a sound recording space for my use in recording radio programs and voiceover work. In addition to making documentaries about the history of architecture, it is useful to have a sound booth for recording film commentaries. Although I am not a trained musician I have played the double bass and tenor/bass

trombone in both jazz and classical music, in fact my wife asked me to play the double bass in a symphony orchestra she founded 35 years ago. I also have a separate studio for my architectural practice but that is now used for my interest as a painter.

***Do you have any previous voiceover or acting experience?***

For a period of 25 years I appeared regularly as an actor in repertory theater where I learned my skills on stage and later put to good use in appearing in BBC TV documentaries and short films. After the two-year TV series about architectural matters, I was asked to do a series of radio interviews about jazz and to contribute to a three-hour radio arts program. This has continued for 30 years and is about to come to an end due to book narration and voiceover work.

***Do you have a favorite audiobook to listen to?***

It is difficult to single out a favorite audio book, it is easier to mention certain actors whose work I admire in narrating books: Stephen Fry, Martin Jarvis and Eleanor Bron. I am interested in historical novels as well as modern writers of mystery and some detective stories.

***What drew you to the world of audiobook narration?***

I was attracted to audiobook narration by listening to books read on the BBC radio channels and thought maybe I could do that and earn some useful money too. Broadcasting was never a major source of income, as was

my architectural practice, and I enjoyed appearing in radio plays, of which I have done several. Many years ago, I was asked to give character voices to a touring marionette theater company, which taught me to invent a variety of accents and character voices, as used in Carrot Field.

***How would you describe Carrot Field?***

I chose to read Carrot Field because it was a challenge to get so many characters to act and especially the quality of the writing. Adventure stories, such as *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkein and *Eudoria's Broomstick* by V.H.I. Knowland, quite different to each other but full of different characters that need a variety of voices to give full color to the story. Carrot Field has that similar quality: adventure, descriptive scenic depth and an innate philosophy for each of the central creatures combined with a flowing use of language. It falls easily on my voice.

***What other books would you compare Carrot Field to?***

I suppose Carrot Field is on the scale of *Lord of the Rings* and *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* for very similar reasons; they are classics in my mind as they combine anthropomorphism with serious rhetoric and poetically descriptive scene-setting.

The writing takes the reader/listener into another world where the images are portrayed in words that conjure up almost a visual reality. That all requires the narrator to get

inside each character, as if each one becomes acceptably familiar, like a friend to love or an enemy to fear. So, I was ‘inside’ the Badger with all his waffling yet he is an intellectual; I was ‘inside the Rabbit’ for his naïve bravery; and the wily Fox with his eerie voice and mystical wisdom. As for all the others, they were vocally represented as they occurred. The biggest challenge was being consistent with each voice when they were all in conversation together.

***How long did it take to complete the recording?***

It has taken several months due to other commitments both in regular radio work and filming. I would say it would have been done in less time, say three months instead of six months otherwise, also it was not a work to be rushed like so many other voice over projects. It was very demanding and rightly so.

***Tell us a little about the recording process.***

Recording Carrot Field was simply a matter of trying to get into the author’s mind, like interpreting a piece of Mozart or Shostakovic, what was he trying to say. It needed to be read thoroughly first and then recorded carefully in sections to maintain continuity and atmosphere. I used the mic and software that I have used for radio programs so editing was very familiar and therefore simpler.

***Who were your favorite characters to voice and why?***

Apart from the three main characters mentioned above, I suppose the dramatic voice of the Lion King, Mospholees

and Malveth. Each were distinctive in their own way: Lion King is powerful but morose; Mospholees as a sympathetic giant of gentle wisdom and bravery; whereas Malveth is majestically powerful yet understanding.

***What was the biggest challenge of recording Carrot Field?***

I have mentioned the challenge of maintaining the consistency of the character voices but most of all hoping to meet the demands of the author's creation. How did he imagine they would sound and did they have the right voice? It was a matter of making the individual character come alive in the story. I lived with each one, day after day until the end, when the adventure was resolved and 'all was peaceful in Carrot Field', a fitting end.

***What is your favorite book and why?***

This is a difficult one I have read so many over the years, so one is inclined to recall the most recent book that impressed me. It was *Merivel, A Man in his Time*, written by Rose Tremain. Robert Merivel, physician and courtier to Charles II, was a person who faced the anxieties of his time with humor, and sadness.

***If you could record any book in the world, even if a recording already exists, what would it be?***

A book I would like to record might be that one, but it has already been done on the BBC. However, Dickens books come to mind as he was a great public reader of his own books, which contained so many fascinating characters

and stories. Clearly, they too have been recorded but I would love to have a go at my own interpretation.

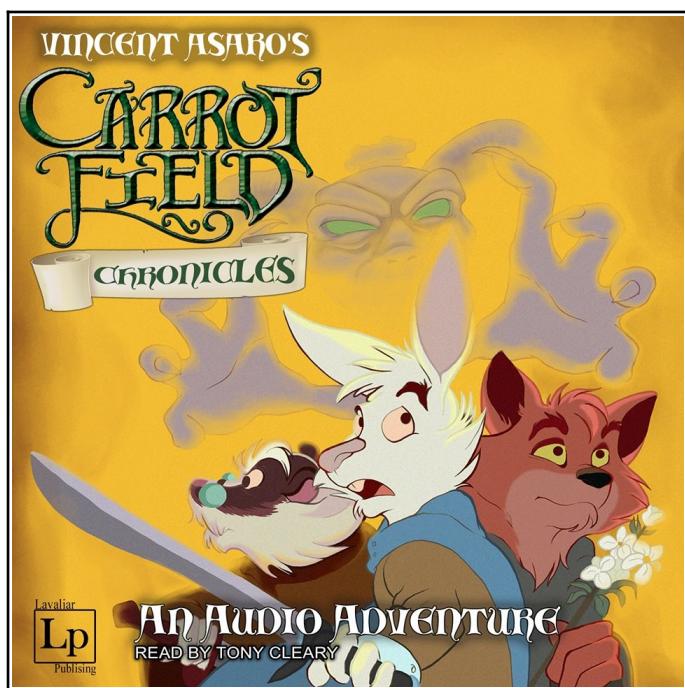
***If you could meet any historical person, who would it be, and why?***

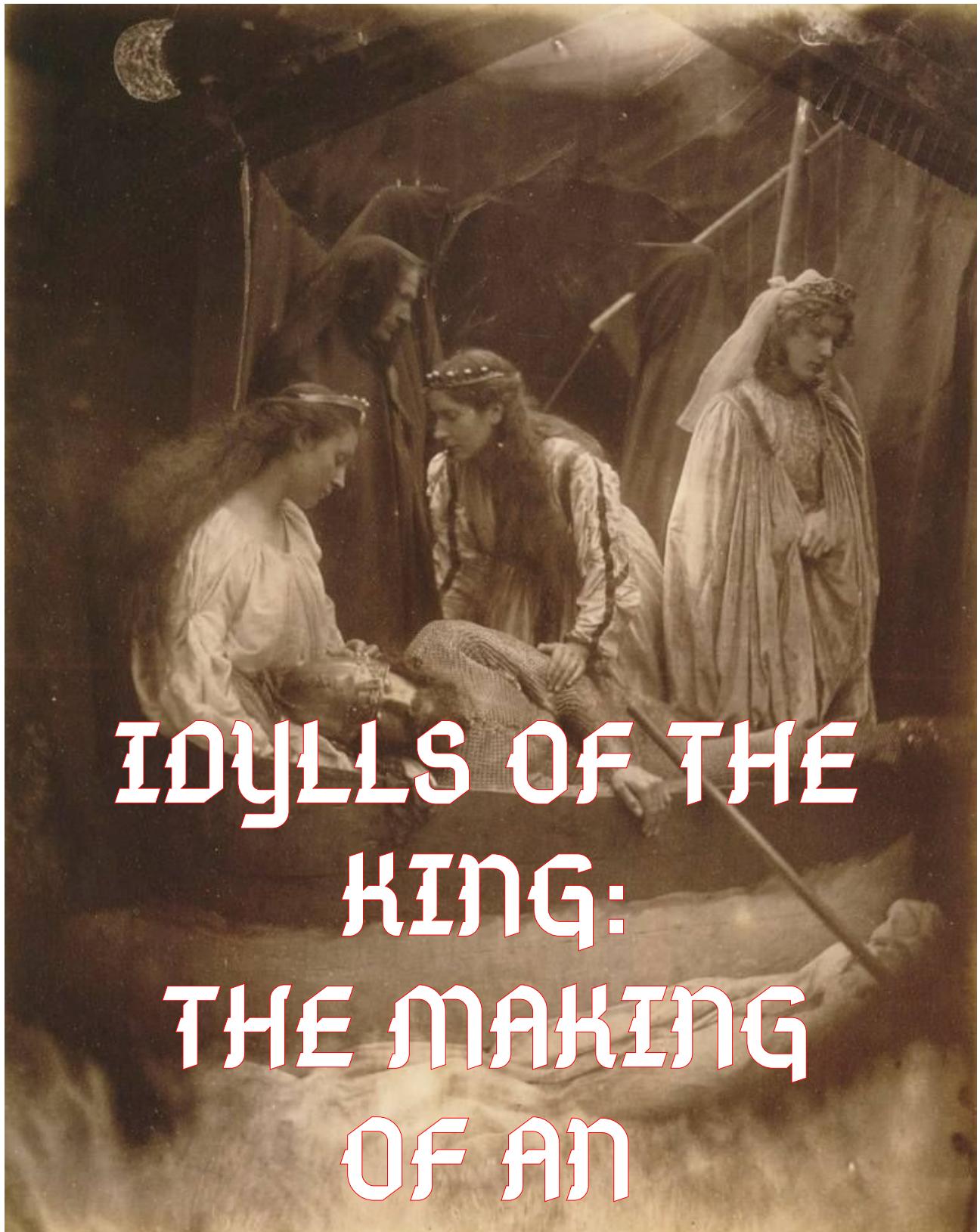
I suppose it is too obvious to say that Shakespeare would be interesting to meet or interview, but then so too would Dickens. On the other hand, I would like to meet the architect Le Corbusier (Pierre Janeret). He was a big influence on my becoming an architect and his humanity was apparent in his designs, brutalistic as they were. Maybe I will meet them one day... *in the other place!*

**The Carrot Field Audiobook is available from Amazon.com and Audible.com**

**Every month the Mythologos Podcast gives away a FREE copy of the audiobook to one Email List Subscriber!**

**Have you listened to the Carrot Field Audiobook? Don't forget to post a review on Audible.com and be sure to mention it in the comments section of any Podcast episode, I'd love to hear from you!**





# IDYLLS OF THE KING: THE MAKING OF AN *EPIC*

## PART ONE: DISCOVERY

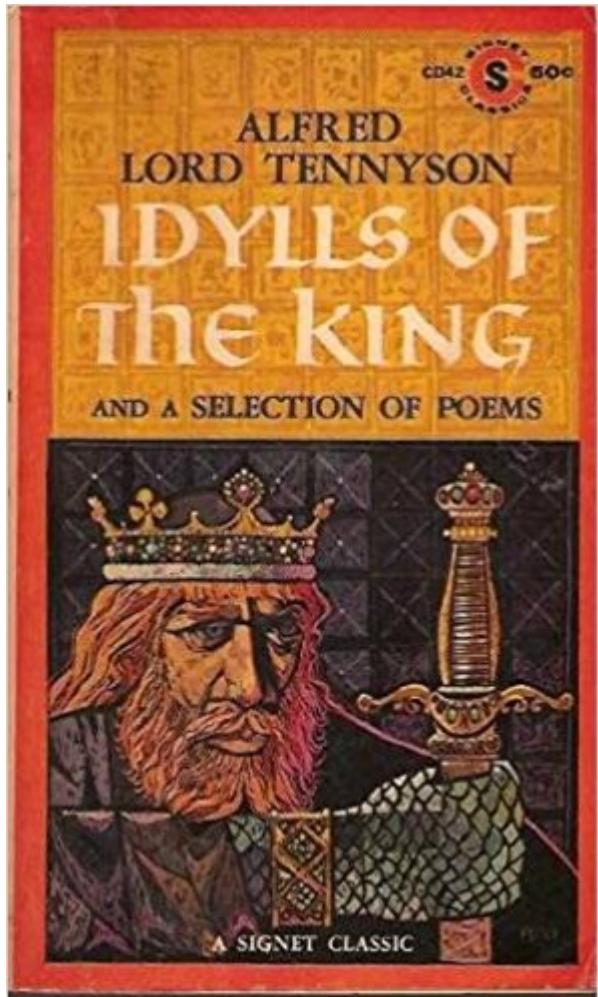


Figure 1: Signet Classics Edition

I first discovered Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" in 1985, I was twelve years old. I saw it, spine-up, in the "for sale" cart at the local library; it was the old Signet Classics paperback edition, and I was already addicted to Signet Classics, seeing the Signet logo was as good as a recommendation from a trusted friend. I remember thinking, "If the book is half as cool as the title, it must be great!" For fifteen cents, I took it home. The poetry I discovered in those pages was far better than the title, and all that long summer I lived inside Tennyson's misty Camelot. It was my first exposure to the Arthurian legend in written form, and my first taste of Victorian poetry outside of Kipling.

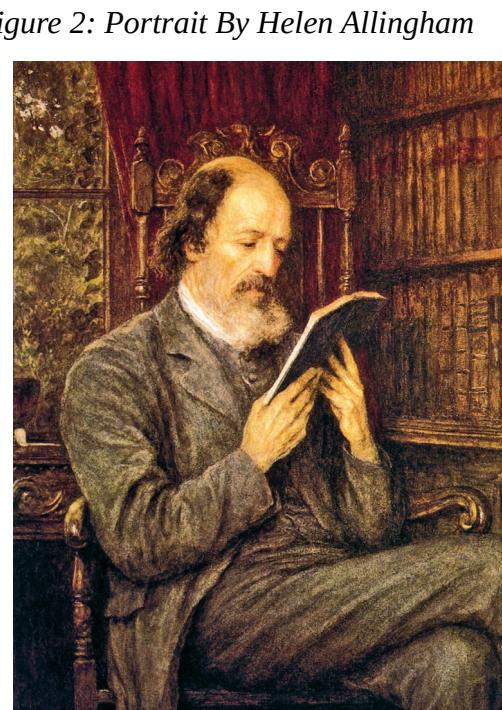
For many years, Tennyson's Arthur was, in my mind at least, the ultimate King Arthur, and to this day no other version has supplanted the Idylls in my imagination. For years, I searched for information on the composition of the epic, and except for a few paltry references in the single Tennyson biography I found, I always came up empty-handed: until this year. Thanks to that amazing resource Archive.org, I have unearthed a trove of documentation all about the creation of the epic, written by the poet's son, Hallam Tennyson, no less.

(References are listed at the end of the article. -Ed.)

## PART TWO: ORIGINS

When Tennyson started to compose the Idylls, he was nearing fifty and already established as England's preeminent poet. This is the earliest note Tennyson made concerning the epic that would define his career and the Victorian era: "He [King Arthur] lived about 500 a.d. and defeated his enemies in a pitched battle in the Welsh kingdom of Strathclyde: and the earliest allusions to him are to be found in the Welsh bards of the seventh century. In the twelfth century Geoffrey of Monmouth collected the legends about him as an European conqueror in his History of the Britons: and translated them from Celtic into Latin. [note: Wace translated them into French and added the story of the Round Table.] The Morte d'Arthur by Sir Thomas Malory was printed by Caxton in 1485."

Tennyson's second sketch expanded on both the tone and the scope of the epic: "On the latest limit of the West in the land of Lyonnesse, where, save the rocky Isles of Scilly, all is now wild sea, rose the sacred Mount of Camelot. It rose from the deeps with gardens and bowers and palaces, and at the top of the Mount was King Arthur's hall, and the holy Minster with the Cross of gold. Here dwelt the King in glory apart, while the Saxons whom he had overthrown in twelve battles ravaged the land, and ever came nearer and nearer. The Mount was the most beautiful in the world, sometimes green and fresh in the beam of morning, sometimes all one splendour, folded in the golden mists of the West. But all underneath it was hollow, and the mountain trembled, when the seas rushed bellowing through the porphyry caves; and there ran a prophecy that the mountain and the city on some wild morning



would topple into the abyss and be no more. It was night. The King sat in his Hall. Beside him sat the sumptuous Guinevere and about him were all his lords and knights of the Table Round. There they feasted, and when the feast was over the Bards sang to the King's glory."

The notebooks themselves are fascinating, described by scholar Joan Hartman like this, "Sometimes Tennyson held the notebook right side up, sometimes upside down; sometimes he progressed forward from page to page in a normal fashion, sometimes backward Chinese-style. In this disorder and confusion, for the manuscript cannot be read consecutively, are segments that constitute the remainder of "Gareth and Lynette'" His actual sketches for verse are surprisingly abstract and fragmented." Here's a sample, from his Grail notebook:

*wickerwork*

*The 7 cold stars of Arthur's wain  
& in a moment all across  
The seven cold stars in colour like a hand  
Before a burning taper past the Grail  
a young damsel  
& thro' the cleft  
I saw the torn sky & the flying rack*

Most of the "prose sketches" exist preserved by archives in their original notebooks and Tennyson would use them to lay out the work ahead for successive phases of work on the idylls. The famed title itself took a long time to form, and Tennyson had eventually to explain his odd coinage, "My Idylls with two l's mainly to divide them from the ordinary pastoral *idyls* usually spelt with one *l*. [My] idylls group themselves round one central figure." Tennyson pronounced the word with a long 'I' as in 'idle'.

Tennyson first tested the waters with shorter, isolated poems, namely Morte d'Arthur and The Lady of Shallot; a sharp critical response

to the inclusion of Arthurian themes in contemporary verse caused Tennyson to withdraw the idea of a long volume devoted entirely to Arthur, instead he would pour his energy into research, preparation and carefully selecting recipients to receive test-copies of collected idylls, to gauge what the public reaction might be. Like Charles Darwin secretly laboring over his "species book", Tennyson would create the whole of the Idylls in secret, even holding some back for as long as a decade before allowing their publication. On one hand, Tennyson feared that an Arthurian verse epic would be dismissed as reactionary, escapist and regressive, and on the other hand he feared that Victorian readers might be offended by the mixing of Christianity with paganism. Early on, perhaps trying to escape the implications of an epic poem, Tennyson even considered mounting the Idylls as an elaborate stage production, part opera, part ballet; he wisely abandoned the concept and returned to his native medium, poetry.

The first phase of real research (in 1856, more than twenty years after the poet's first foray into Arthurian verse) took the form of several fact-finding trips to Wales, where Tennyson believed the Arthurian tradition had had its genesis. These trips were mostly recorded by his wife, Emily, but his son Hallam Tennyson fills in some vital details: "With the help of local schoolmasters in Wales my parents learned some Welsh, and now read together the *Hanes Cymru* (Welsh History), the *Mabinogion* and *Llywarch Hen*." Tennyson had actually packed a Welsh dictionary for the trip, he and Emily started teaching themselves Welsh on the way to Wales. Together, the Tennysons visited as many Welsh locations related to the Arthurian tradition as they could manage. Tennyson was always on the lookout for anyone who could help him with the language or 'antiquarians' (Hallam records, this was usually a 'chemist', cobbler or other tradesman) who might shed light on local legends. Even in the mid-19th century, legitimate bards could still be found in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and Tennyson sought them out on

his Welsh excursions, soaking up their authentic airs and ballads and pressing them for more Welsh lore.

The Welsh medieval collection of stories, *Mabinogion* (first translated into English by Lady Charlotte Guest, but also given its standard title by her, the original manuscript has no title) was a pivotal guide for Tennyson, but Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* would persist as the most important of Tennyson's references, the poet often paraphrasing or simply expanding on Malory's text. Several other sources would provide material and direction for the poet, chiefly the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, but *Mabinogion* and Malory remained Tennyson's primary texts.

By design, the Idylls are pregnant with implied subtext, but the meaning of these glimpsed symbols, metaphors and parables always remains elusive. Tennyson provided several exegeses for the Idylls, in private notes and letters, public statements and in his salutary epilogue to the epic, "To The Queen", ranging from religio-moral allegory to political anti-modernism, but as Hallam himself observed, both in his annotations to the Idylls and the first of two memoirs devoted to his famous father, none of these schema agree with each other or provide satisfying coherence to the constantly shifting symbolic layers of the epic. The most engaging element of the Idylls is their open-ended nature, inviting the reader to interpret the epic as a personal, as opposed to universal, text.

## **PART THREE: THE EPIC IS BORN**

After receiving a mostly enthusiastic response to a very small test-printing of the first set of idylls, Tennyson at last published the first volume of his epic, including only four idylls, in 1859. This was the first public unveiling of Tennyson's secret title, *The Idylls of the King*, and the poet was surprised and pleased to discover that his neologism, "Idylls" as an episodic epic instead of a pastoral poem, was enthusiastically accepted

and swiftly adopted by the public. The four idylls included were "Enid", "Vivien", "Elaine", and "Guinevere", a conceptual cycle virtually free of fantasy elements and focused on thorny moral questions; any taint of regressive 'escapism' had been purged by the poet, by carefully selecting these four pieces, although he had already written "The Coming of Arthur", Tennyson would hold that back until his Idylls were firmly established as serious, contemporary literature and morally edifying reading. Tennyson also subtly re-contextualized the whole Arthuriad by focusing on female characters instead of male heroes, setting a trend for 20th and 21st century treatments of the Arthuriad.

The impact of the first volume can only be compared to pop cultural phenomena such as the original Star Wars (1977) or the Harry Potter craze, the first idylls were a sensation and fans deluged Tennyson with letters begging for more. The fervor reached fever pitch over the next few years, with overly enthusiastic fans trespassing Tennyson's country estate to get a glimpse of the great man, necessitating the purchase of several acres of neighboring property to put some distance between the poet and his more fanatical readers.

The public had a long wait ahead. Tennyson would not be rushed nor would he allow himself to be pigeonholed. Each volume of Idylls underwent an intense development period, marked by deep research, advice sought from friends and colleagues, private (family) readings of the works in progress, endless revisions and the poet agonizing over every line, until the floodgates broke and the poems came swiftly and easily; most of the remaining idylls were, miraculously, written in a matter of weeks, or even days, and barely rewritten after, but the struggle to reach those breakthrough moments was fierce and Tennyson did not spare himself the torment of his process. The idylls were special, and he knew that, he was composing an epic for all time, so he lavished time and attention on them above and beyond any of his other works.

A full decade would pass before the next volume was published, "The Holy Grail and Other Poems" (1869). Tennyson struggled with the Grail episode more than any other; here he was confronted both with

enchantment (easily misread as escapism by the critics) and the mingling of Christian and pagan themes (just as easily misread as blasphemous by devout readers) that he had so feared from the start. Following the pattern set by the other idylls, Tennyson worked and reworked the concept, filling a notebook with cryptic notes, prose and verse:

*And there stood a seat in our great Hall which Merlin had fashioned long ago before he past away; & it was carved with strange figures & in & out the figures there were letters in a tongue no man could read; Merlin call'd the seat The Siege Perilous for he said No man can sit there but he shall lose himself & Galahad said If I lose myself I shall save myself.*

*And the day was one of driving showers: & as they drew near to Camelot, sometimes the city gleam'd out at top while the rest of it was hidden, sometimes only the middle of it was seen, sometimes only the great gate of Arthur at the bottom & sometimes it disappeared altogether.*

*Sir Dagonet, the king's fool, stood before the hall of Arthur. & the wind was blowing & the leaves flying in the wood below.*

*[And below him there past into the wood Sir Lamorack & his head was down, & his heart darkend for he had heard that Queen Bellicent was dead.]*

*So, till it darken'd after evensong,  
The two rode on, reviler & reviled.  
Then after climbing a great slope they saw  
(a glo) Bowl-shaped, a gloomy gladed hollow sink  
To westward, & beneath, a rounded mere  
Red as the round eye of an Eagle-owl  
Under the half-dead sunset glared in gloom.*

The work went on for years, until the whole thing came at once, finished in a mere two weeks. Tennyson reasoned that he had already composed it in his head and when the time came, the poem wrote itself. The tension created by the slow and painful process was palpable in the Tennyson household, and the completion of the long-delayed episode was noted, with relief, by Emily Tennyson in her diary. "The Holy Grail" is the most enigmatic of the idylls, filled with fleeting symbolism, adapted primarily from the Mabinogion, and presaging Richard Wagner's psychologically penetrating treatment of the Grail legend in his grand opera, "Parsifal". The poem was another immediate success, generating a cottage industry of pamphlets and tracts endeavoring to decipher its imagery and subtext. The volume also provided, at last, an origin story for Arthur, "The Coming of Arthur", a mystical nativity, although we are told Merlin laughed the story off, leaving the reader to decide whether the story is true or not. Tennyson also included subtle reworkings of the previously published idylls, always seeking to cut away excess, clarify the narrative and themes, and bring the whole epic into continuity.

"The Last Tournament" was published in 1871 as a stand-alone episode, in the journal Contemporary Review, followed by "Gareth and Lynette" the next year. The last of the idylls, "Balin and Balan" was published in "Tiresias and Other Poems", in 1885. The epic actually contains two dedications, one in 1862 in memory of the recently deceased "Prince Consort" Albert and "To The Queen" in 1873. The Idylls of the King is truly a Victorian poem, something that could not be made in the world as it exists today.

## CONCLUSION

What is to be made of the Idylls of the King today? Tennyson's Arthur, with his unique mysterious nativity and martyr-like arc, is not the Arthur of legend, he is an altogether sanitized and Christianized figure, even moreso than in Malory. Elements of enchantment have been all but eliminated, and the epic is mostly focused on the moral character

of the players, with very little chivalric action and hardly a trace of "courtly love". In essence, Tennyson stripped the Arthuriad of all its original contexts. The epic hardly seems contemporary today, almost two centuries after its initial publication. Is it nothing more than musty old Victoriana, as its harshest critics continue to insist, best left behind with crinoline skirts and hansom cabs?

In my opinion, while it's true that the idylls creak at the joints in certain places, the epic has lost none of its original verve. Much of what Tennyson had to say about human nature and society is still true today, and his Arthurian characters, while drastically altered from their medieval counterparts, are still vivid and memorable in their unusual quest for moral perfection and an ideal social order. Anyone who loves poetry should read the Idylls, and I believe, anyone who loves poetry will inevitably love the Idylls of the King.

- Ed.

**SOURCES:**

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**Alfred Tennyson: A Memoir** (Hallam Tennyson)

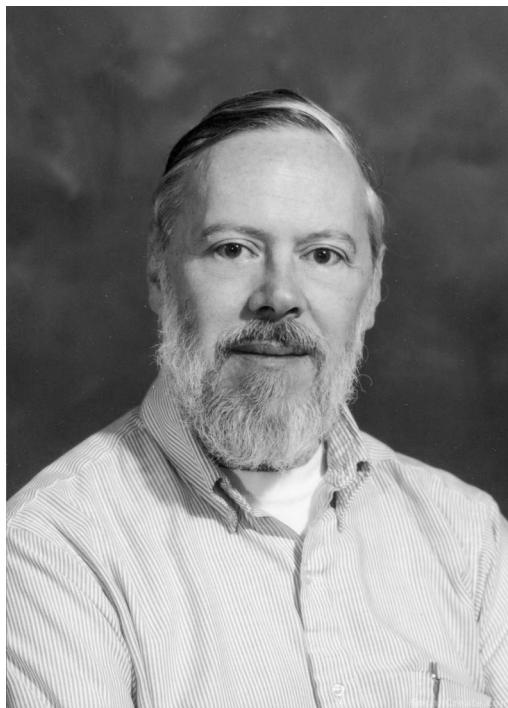
**Tennyson & His Friends** (Hallam Tennyson)

**Idylls of the King** (Annotated by Alfred Tennyson - Edited by Hallam Tennyson)

**The Coming of Arthur and Other Idylls of the King** (Edited With Notes by William J Rolfe)

**Tennyson A Selected Edition** (Edited by Christopher Ricks)

# UNIX PROFILES: 0001 DENNIS RITCHIE



Dennis Ritchie

- + Born Dennis MacAlistair Ritchie 1941, Bronxville NY, grew up in New Jersey.
- + Father (Alistair) worked as a switching systems engineer for Bell Laboratories, Dennis took an early interest in computers and the Labs.
- + Attended Harvard University, studied science and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Physics; while at college, discovered the Univac I and started studying computer programming independently.
- + Started working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), stayed there for many years, working alongside computer scientists. "Instead of focusing on specific projects, I wanted to be

around people with a lot of experience and ideas. So I started working on various projects to learn my way around the profession."

- + Ritchie's focus shifted to Operating Systems.
- + Started working at Bell Labs in 1967.
- + In 1968 started working with Ken Thompson on the UNIX project, a user-friendly operating system.
- + Created the C Programming Language, which is still in use today.
- + Almost every Mac and Linux command line function and utility comes directly from Unix. Unix and C Language kicked off the "small computer" (later "micro-computer") revolution. Without Unix, we'd be living in a very different world!
- + Along with other alums from the Bell Laboratories Unix team, Dennis created Plan9, usually tagged as an operating system, Plan9 is more of a *programming environment for OS development*: check out the Plan9 text editor, Acme (developed by Rob Pike) for an idea of how inventive the project was. Plan9 was definitely influential on the later development of OS's like NeXT, OSX, BSD & Linux.
- + Dennis Ritchie died October 12, 2011 at the age of 70, one week after Steve Jobs, but there were no magazine covers, news profiles, documentaries, feature films or candlelight vigils to mark his passing.

# QUOTES

“A language that doesn't have everything is actually easier to program in than some that do.”

“... with proper design, the features come cheaply. This approach is arduous, but continues to succeed.”

“UNIX is simple and coherent, but it takes a programmer to understand and appreciate its simplicity.”

“Some consider UNIX to be the second most important invention to come out of AT&T Bell Labs after the transistor.”

“Oh, I've seen copies of *Linux Journal* around the terminal room at The Labs.”

“It seems certain that much of the success of Unix follows from the readability, modifiability, and portability of its software.”

“The True-GNU philosophy is more extreme than I care for, but it certainly laid a foundation for the current scene, as well as providing real software.”

“It's not the actual programming that's interesting. But it's what you can accomplish with the end results that are important.”

## **BUG FIX:**

Some people have complained that they can't get audio on my Odysee uploads via iPhone. Compliments of subscriber F. Underwood, a possible solution:

"I made some test clips using simplescreenrecorder and played them on the iPhone. Using all default settings and a MP4 container there was no sound with Vorbis and MP3, only AAC works. My guess is that Odysee uses the built in media player in iOS which only supports AAC audio when playing MP4 videos, because the files all played with audio when I opened them in the VLC app. Mystery solved, I guess."

## **CARROT FIELD 2 UPDATE:**

Work on Carrot Field: The Distant Land continues. In the past month I've done a lot of editing, getting the word count down and focusing the story, which was getting out of hand! I am still on track to publish between Thanksgiving & Christmas 2021!

## **OMNIAD UPDATE:**

Masses of research and preparation continue for Volume I (of 15) of Omnid. This massive project, started in 1980, will occupy the rest of my life. Omnid is set to be the longest novel ever written in the English language. For more information, check out the "What Is Omnid" videos on the Mythologos channel and stay tuned for more Podcasts and Newsletter features chronicling this unprecedented project!

That's all for now, see you next month with more features, behind-the-scenes, Unix Profiles and more! - Ed.